

Renowned breast oncologist heads to USC

By Cheryl Bruyninckx

A national figure in breast cancer research is headed to USC to serve as co-leader of the Women's Cancer Program at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Debasish (Debu) Tripathy has been appointed professor of medicine by Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito, effective Aug. 1, 2009. Tripathy will hold the Art and Priscilla Ulene Chair in Women's Cancer, and will be head of the Section of Women's Cancers, Division of Oncology, in the Department of Medicine. He will join Dr. Michael Press, Professor of Pathology, who has been associated with the Women's Cancer Program for the last 16 years.

"Dr. Tripathy is a national authority in breast cancer," said Puliafito. "We are delighted that he is coming to USC as we strengthen our clinical research activities and our

patient-focused programs."

Tripathy comes to USC from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, where he served as Professor of Internal Medicine, Director of the Komen/UT Southwestern Breast Cancer Research Program and holder of the Annette Simmons Distinguished Chair in Breast Cancer Research. He was also President and Chief Executive Officer of Physicians' Education Resource in Dallas, a continuing medical education and publishing company specializing in oncology and hematology.

As the incoming co-leader of the Women's Cancer Program, Tripathy has identified several goals, including developing a nationally recognized women's cancer service; increasing the number of treatment and clinical trial options for patients; developing a clinical trials and research program that



Debasish (Debu) Tripathy

matches the needs of patients and interfaces with the areas of scientific excellence at USC; setting up community outreach programs and forums; and establishing a national and international leadership position in medical peer oncology education.

"I believe that USC is responding to a new mission that is an expansion of patient care, a bigger commitment to research, and a dedication to

having the two work side by side," said Tripathy. "I believe that clinical care, clinical research and laboratory research all go hand in hand."

A nationally recognized figure in clinical research, Tripathy's primary area of interest is breast cancer therapy. For the past 20 years, he has studied growth factor receptors, important targets in breast and other cancers. Tripathy was part of the original team that brought the now commonly used drug Herceptin into clinical care. Currently, his focus is on expanding what is known about growth factor receptors and developing newer treatments for patients who are resistant to the existing therapeutic options.

"Dr. Tripathy's work will enhance our efforts to bring basic molecular research on breast cancer from the lab to the clinic, where we can directly

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'Dr. Tripathy is a national authority in breast cancer. We are delighted that he is coming to USC as we strengthen our clinical research activities and our patient-focused programs.'

—Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito



At the May 30 event welcoming Inderbir S. "Indy" Gill to USC are (from left): Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito, Gill and actors Shirley MacLaine, Annette Bening and Warren Beatty.

USC welcomes new Dept. of Urology chair at Beverly Hills reception

By Leslie Ridgeway

Pioneering urologist and surgeon Inderbir S. "Indy" Gill, was welcomed to Los Angeles and the Trojan Family at a Beverly Hills reception hosted by actress Shirley MacLaine and Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito on May 30.

More than 300 guests, including USC friends, donors and referring physicians, attended the cocktail gala at the Montage Hotel, including MacLaine's brother, actor Warren Beatty and his wife, actress Annette Bening, and USC Executive Vice President and Provost C.L. Max Nikias.

Gill is chair of the Catherine and Joseph Aresty Department of Urology and is the founding executive director of the USC Institute of Urology. Recruited from the Cleveland Clinic, where the urology program is ranked #2 in the country by *U.S. News and World Report*, Gill has pioneered minimally invasive surgeries for cancers of the kidney, prostate and bladder.

Gill is the first in the world to perform single-port "belly button" laparoscopic kidney donation surgery in a virtually scar-free manner. He also is the world leader in performing minimally invasive, kidney-sparing surgery for kidney cancer.

MacLaine, in her introduction of Gill, noted that Beatty found him when looking for a surgeon to help a friend. MacLaine said she spoke to Gill at length and was impressed with what she heard from him.

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USC scientist receives accolades for research, community service

By Katie Neith

Cheryl Craft, the Mary D. Allen Chair in Vision Research at the Doheny Eye Institute and professor of ophthalmology and cell & neurobiology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, has received numerous honors in the past months for her vision research work and community service efforts.

On April 16, Craft was honored at a luncheon hosted by The Founding Associates of the John Douglas French Alzheimer's Foundation (JDFAF). Held at the Beverly Hills Hotel, Craft was recognized for her long-term commitment to the foundation, as well as for her scientific research. She has served on the International Scientific Advisory Board since the late 1990s, and also is currently a Member on the Board of Directors of the foundation.

"Over decades of dedicated pursuit, Dr. Craft and her fellow colleagues have deciphered the keys which turn chemical pathways on and off inside nerve cells," said Helena Chui, chair of the Department of Neurology at the Keck School of Medicine and director of the USC Alzheimer Disease Research Center, in her introduction of Craft at the JDFAF event. "In following the trail of arrestin and retinal cones responsible for color vision, Dr. Craft has contributed greatly to our understanding of retinitis pigmentosa and macular degen-

eration. Understanding these messaging systems inside nerve cells has widespread implications for all neuroscience, including unraveling the mysteries of Alzheimer disease."

The Muses of the California Science Center Foundation also recently honored Craft for the research advances she has made in macular degeneration and retinitis pigmentosa. On May 16, she was celebrated as The Muses 43rd Annual Woman of the Year at a reception and lecture held at the Valley Hunt Club in Pasadena.

The Muses is a volunteer organization associated with the California Science Museum, which raises funds to support educational youth science programs and the California State Science Fair.

"As a scientist, it is really humbling to go out and interact with the public. I am proud to represent the Keck School of Medicine of USC and spread supporting words for science and science education. I am honored to receive these prestigious awards from these dedicated individuals raising resources for research and to support future scientists," said Craft.

In addition, Craft has been named a 2009 silver fellow of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO). The ARVO Fellows are recognized for their long-term accomplishments, leadership and contributions to the association.



Cheryl Craft speaks at the April 16 John Douglas French Alzheimer's Foundation event, which honored her for her work.

Stephen J. Ryan appointed to new term as IOM home secretary

Stephen J. Ryan, the Grace and Emery Beardsley Chair in Ophthalmology, has been named to a second four-year term as Institute of Medicine (IOM) home secretary beginning July 1.

IOM President Harvey Fineberg recently announced the appointment, saying Ryan “has been of extraordinary assistance to the President and the Council in strengthening and supporting membership activities and participation and we anticipate with pleasure the continued progress his stewardship will accomplish.”

He added, “Dr. Ryan’s service to this institution has been vigorous. Prior to his current term as Home Secretary, he served for two years

as chair of the Membership Committee after representing his section on the committee for the previous three years.”

Ryan, an ophthalmologist and an internationally recognized expert in the field of retinal diseases and ocular trauma, is a member of numerous professional organizations and is the Founding President of the Alliance for Eye and Vision Research. He was elected to the Institute of Medicine in 1995.

Established in 1970 under the charter of the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine provides independent, objective, evidence-based advice to policymakers, health professionals, the private sector and the public.

Gift establishes endowed chair in pediatric urology at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles

Writer, director and producer Jefery Levy and his wife, Pamela Skaist-Levy, co-founder of Juicy Couture, have made a \$2 million gift to establish the Leonard B. Skaist Endowed Chair in Pediatric Urology at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. This generous gift was inspired by Pamela Skaist-Levy’s father, Leonard Skaist, a Keck School physician who has been a pediatric urologist at the hospital for 45 years.

“I was so impressed with the work of these doctors, including my father—that I felt like I had to get involved,” said Skaist-Levy. “These doctors make a difference in the lives of sick children and their families.”

The endowment will support the division’s research,

equipment, faculty retention and recruitment, as well as program support. The Skaist-Levy family has committed to making Childrens Hospital their main charitable organization. In addition to organizing next year’s newly created annual “Night to Remember” fund raiser, Skaist-Levy said Juicy Couture will be launching a Barbie doll later this year with proceeds going to the hospital’s division of pediatric urology.

“Our work has just begun—I will work tirelessly to raise money for the hospital,” Skaist-Levy said. “Childrens Hospital is an incredible place. Few hospitals can do what Childrens Hospital can do and few doctors can do the work of these pediatric urologists.”

ETCETERA

John Peters, Hastings Professor and director of the division of environmental health in the Keck School’s Department of Preventive Medicine, recently received the Harvard University School of Public Health’s Alumni Award of Merit.

Peters, who received his M.D. and M.P.H. degrees from Harvard in 1964, was honored for his work on diverse fields such as the health effects of air pollution, magnetic fields, asbestos, vinyl chloride and other chemicals in both the work and general environments.

Peters also recently received the 2009 John M. Peters award from the Environmental and Occupational Health Assembly of the American Thoracic Society. He is the first named recipient of this award.

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Sook-Lei Liew, a doctoral student of occupational science and occupational therapy, recently received a three-year award from the National Science Foundation’s Graduate Research Fellowship Program. Liew, one of four USC students who received the award, will explore how cultural experiences affect the neural networks that help a person to understand individuals from different cultures.

To test her research, Liew plans to use functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), a brain imaging technique that can visualize which parts of the brain are active during a particular task, according to Lisa Aziz-Zadeh, assistant professor in the Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, who has a joint appointment in the Brain and Creativity Institute of USC College and is Lei’s faculty mentor.

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Edmond Hsin-tung Pi, professor of clinical psychiatry at the Keck School, received the 2009 Asian American Award of the American Psychiatric Association in May at the group’s annual meeting in San Francisco. The award honored Pi for “significant contributions toward understanding the impact and import of Asian cultural heritage in areas which have relevance in psychiatry.”

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Timothy J. Triche, chair of the Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine and pathologist-in-chief at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, has been tapped to develop the hospital’s

new Center for Personalized Medicine (CPM).

The CPM will coordinate, support and expand the hospital’s basic and translational research in genomics, proteomics, bioinformatics, molecular genetics, molecular microbiology and cytogenetics.

Triche, who is also vice chair of the Department of Pathology and professor of pathology and pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine, said the CPM is “an absolutely vital component of our commitment to the research enterprise.”

At the hospital, he will remain as chair of the Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine and pathologist-in-chief while a national search for his successor is conducted.

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Three members of the Keck School of Medicine have been recognized as 2009 USC Mellon Mentoring Award Recipients. The awards honor individual faculty for helping build a supportive academic environment at USC through faculty-to-student and faculty-to-faculty mentoring.

The recipient for faculty mentoring faculty was **Robertson Parkman**, professor of pediatrics. The recipients for faculty mentoring graduate students were: **Michael Goran**, professor of preventive medicine and physiology & biophysics; and **Elizabeth Lawlor**, assistant professor of pediatrics.

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Vernon T. Tolo, vice chair for pediatric orthopaedics at the Keck School of Medicine, has received the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America (POSNA).

The Distinguished Achievement Award, considered a lifetime achievement award, is the highest recognition the organization bestows on its peers. Tolo was recognized at the group’s annual meeting in Boston on April 30.

Tolo, who is also head of the division of orthopaedic surgery at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, and the John C. Wilson Jr. Professor of Orthopedic Surgery, received the award for his advocacy for pediatric orthopaedics as president of the Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America, as president of the Scoliosis Research Society and as president of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

DID WE SAY THAT?

The Weekly misidentified a student in a front-page caption in its May 22 issue. The lead photo, of a student in cap and gown and holding a bouquet of flowers and colored balloons, was actually of Keck School graduate Melissa Macklin. In addition, the name of a second Keck School student, Adam Seidl, was misspelled in a page 2 caption. *The Weekly* regrets these errors.

The Weekly

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USC oncologists present ground-breaking findings at ASCO

USC researchers with the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center presented breakthrough research in a number of study areas at the 2009 American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., May 29-June 2.

Colorectal Cancer

- A study led by Heinz-Josef Lenz, professor of medicine at the Keck School of Medicine, tested for the first time gene variations that have been recently shown to be associated with colon cancer development.

Researchers looked at whether these genes are associated with clinical outcomes in colorectal cancer.

The study is the first to explore the association between these variants and clinical outcomes for patients with both adjuvant and metastatic colorectal cancer.

“We were able to show for the first time that genes associated with colon cancer risk may also predict outcome in patients who develop colon cancer,” Lenz said. “These data are critical for the development of preventive and therapeutic strategies.”

Researchers pooled data collected from 515 patients with locally advanced and metastatic colorectal cancer. They identified colorectal cancer susceptibility on several chromosomes, suggesting that cancer risk alleles may also be associated with clinical outcome in adjuvant and metastatic colorectal cancer.

Lenz also participated in an education session on established biomarkers guiding treatment decisions in colorectal cancer.

Lung Cancer

- A study led by Wu Zhang, research scientist at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, found that the genetic makeup of patients with non-small cell lung cancer predicted tumor response and overall survival when treated with the drug Bevacizumab, also known as Avastin.

In a randomized phase III study, researchers found that genetic variants in the angiogenesis pathway predicted patients’ tumor response, progression-free survival and overall survival when treated with Bevacizumab as compared with those treated with traditional chemotherapy only.

“This study could have a major impact on patient treatment,” Wu said. “Oncologists could select the personalized treatment for patients based on their genetic makeup.”

Pancreas and Esophageal Cancers

- In two separate studies, USC Norris researchers found that gender, age and ethnicity are associated with pancreas cancer survival, and that gender and age are associated with overall survival in patients with esophageal cancer.

In the first major study to address gender and survival in pancreas cancer, researchers found that women had a significantly longer survival among patients with localized pancreatic cancer, and that each age group displayed a significantly longer survival rate than its correspondent older age group.

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‘This study could have a major impact on patient treatment. Oncologists could select the personalized treatment for patients based on their genetic makeup’

–Wu Zhang, research scientist at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center

NEWSMAKERS

The June issue of *GQ* Magazine featured cancer researcher **David Agus** as a “Rock Star of Science.” *The Scientist*, Medscape Medical News and KCBS-TV also reported that Agus was featured in the issue.

On May 29, “NBC Nightly News” interviewed ophthalmologist **Mark Humayun**, vascular surgeon **Fred Weaver** and nephrologist **Mitra Nadim** for separate stories on the retinal eye implant and Rheos Implant to treat high blood pressure.

A May 27 *San Gabriel Valley Tribune* article quoted clinical pediatrician **Astrid Heger** about the Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center’s Violence Intervention Program.

A May 22 *New York Times* article featured pharmacoeconomics expert **Joel Hay** in an op-ed on efforts to legalize marijuana.

A May 22 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article noted that preventive medicine expert **Jonathan Samet** chairs the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee, a panel of independent scientists that advises the Environmental Protection Agency on air quality.

A May 22 *Science* article noted that in the past few years California has attracted two key members of the Australian team that produced the world’s second human embryonic stem cell line, one of whom is stem cell expert **Martin Pera**.

On May 22, MedCenter Today online featured a USC News article on a \$5 million gift from the Ellison Medical Foundation to support cancer research under the direction of cancer researcher **David Agus**.

On May 22, CTV (Canada) interviewed radiologist **Peter Conti** about a shortage in the supply of medical isotopes in Canada.

A May 21 Medical News Today online article featured research by biochemistry and immunology researcher **Jae Jung** and colleagues on flu viruses. The team identified a molecular mechanism that allows the flu virus to evade immune system response. MediLexicon online, *Agenzia Giornalistica Italia* (Italy) and the Indo-Asian News Service (India) also featured the research.

A May 21 *New Scientist* article quoted molecular biologist **Pragna Patel** about research into the genetic causes of a condition characterized by excess facial and body hair.

A May 20 *Dallas Morning News* article noted that in April, USC completed its purchase of USC University Hospital and the USC Norris Cancer Hospital from Tenet Healthcare Corp.

A May 19 *Forbes* article quoted Alzheimer’s expert **Lon Schneider** about a study suggesting that rapid weight loss in seniors signals higher dementia risk.



IN THE FIGHT—Demonstrating its commitment to Fight On! against women’s cancers, Team USC Norris recently participated in two special events. The Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure (left) held in March and the ELF Revlon Run/Walk (above) in May helped raise awareness and resources for women’s cancer research and outreach projects.

For more information on Team USC Norris and to learn how you can participate in future events, please contact Kerry Franco at kfranco@usc.edu or Tonya Strom at tstrom@usc.edu.

TRIPATHY: USC ‘is the right place and the right time’

Continued from page 1
benefit patients,” said Peter Jones, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. “We are elated that he will be joining us.”

Beyond his expertise in clinical research, Tripathy is profoundly involved in patient care and survivorship issues.

He is particularly interested in the patient perspective of the cancer experience and dissemination of informational tools. Tripathy is co-author of the book, *Breast Cancer: Beyond Convention*, featuring advice from other prominent physicians, such as Susan Love and Dean Ornish. He also serves as Editor-in-Chief of *CURE* magazine, which is the most widely circulated cancer-specific magazine for patients.

Tripathy has received numerous prestigious awards, including the Heroes Award, presented by the Breast Cancer Fund for excellence in clinical care. He also received the Award in Medicine Research by the Greater Dallas Asian American Chamber of Commerce for his outstanding research accomplishments in breast cancer.

“I am excited to come to USC because historically this place has a wonderful track record of excellence in the basic sciences and the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center is one of the original cancer centers from 1973,” said Tripathy. “All of those things together, along with the University’s new commitment to patient care and clinical research, told me that this is the right place and the right time.”



Brian Morri

FIGHT ON! – Members of the Keck School of Medicine Class of 1959 are joined by members of the Trojan Marching Band in giving the familiar victory sign at the 50 Year Fellows Luncheon. The luncheon on May 8 at Town and Gown honored those who graduated from the Keck School 50 or more years ago. Dean Carmen A. Puliafito presented medallions to the new 50 Year Fellows. The guest speaker was Jonathan Samet, professor and Flora L. Thornton Chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine. Speaking on “Ending the Tobacco Epidemic: 50 Years of Progress,” Samet showed the audience old ads and photographs of the tobacco industry from 1959.

Calendar of Events

This Calendar of events is also online at www.usc.edu/hscalendar for the Health Sciences Campus community

Monday, June 8

Noon. “Drug Overdose and Intoxication (V),” Alan Yu, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

Tuesday, June 9

9 a.m. Neurology Grand Rounds. “In My Car the Brake is on the Right: Medically At-risk Drivers, Errors, and the Potential for Restricted Licenses in Maintaining Mobility,” Barbara Freund, Eastern Virginia Medical School. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-7686

Wednesday, June 10

Noon. Renal Grand Rounds. “History and Development of Acute Dialysis and CRRT,” Hosamedlin Madkour, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

Friday, June 12

11 a.m. Hematology Grand Rounds. “CML Program Overview,” David Masiello, USC. IPT C2J103. Info: (323) 865-3950

Monday, June 15

Noon. “Tubulointerstitial Renal Disease,” Hosamel-din Madkour, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

4 p.m. “Research in Progress,” Rami Bouajram, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

Wednesday, June 17

Noon. “Nephrology,” Mitra Nadim, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

Noon. Renal Grand Rounds. “Renal Biopsy,” Michael Koss and Vito Campese, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

Friday, June 19

11 a.m. Hematology Grand Rounds. “Hemophagocytic Syndrome – Diagnosis, Pathophysiology and Treatment,” Edwin Lin, USC. IPT C2J103. Info: (323) 865-3950

Monday, June 22

Noon. “Psychosocial and Ethical Issues of Dialysis,” Mohammad Akmal, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

Wednesday, June 24

Noon. Renal Grand Rounds. “Nephrology,” Mitra Nadim, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

Friday, June 26

11 a.m. Hematology Grand Rounds. “Diagnosis and Treatment of Gaucher Disease,” Zack Spiegelman, Harvard. IPT C2J103. Info: (323) 865-3950

Monday, June 29

Noon. “Evaluation,” Miroslaw Smogorzewski, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

Notice: Deadline for calendar submission is 4 p.m. Monday to be considered for that week’s issue—although three weeks’ advance notice of events is recommended. Please note that timely submission does not guarantee an item will be printed. Send calendar items to HSC Weekly, KAM 400 or fax to (323) 442-2832, or e-mail to ebllaauw@usc.edu. Entries must include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location, and a phone number for information.

GILL: New chair receives star-studded welcome to USC

Continued from page 1

“We discussed the role of surgery, urology, and the broader scope of what the medical profession means,” she said. “I found him to be conversant, and an extremely intelligent man.”

MacLaine, who joked earlier that she may have known Gill “for about one million years,” expressed her hope that her friendship with Gill would last many years to come.

“I think minds are like parachutes—they function more fully when they’re open,” she said. “Welcome, Indy, my friend with a parachute mind.”

Puliafito noted Gill’s “leadership in the field of robotic and laparoscopic surgery for urologic cancers” and his international reputation. “He is truly a beacon surgeon—70 percent of his patients come from around the world and across the United States.”

Gill elicited murmurs of amazement during his discussion of innovations his team is working on, including organ building and regeneration, image-guided surgery, automated robotic surgery and development of personalized medicine.

He also outlined his strategic vision for the

USC Institute of Urology, including the goal of seeing the program ranked among the top five urologic programs in the country in the next five years, and the importance of philanthropy in achieving that goal.

He entertained the group with a story of inviting Warren Beatty to watch a surgical procedure. Beatty smiled and shook his head as Gill recalled Beatty, in a sterile environment, reaching out to rescue an item of surgical equipment that appeared to be falling.

“USC is really breathtaking in scope,” Gill said in closing. “The entrepreneurship and leadership are energizing. We will put together a world-class team.”

The USC Institute of Urology includes 20 full-time faculty and more than 30 post-graduate residents and fellows dedicated to excellence in patient care and research. The institute comprises eight specialty centers including: the Center for Comprehensive Urologic Oncology, Center for Pediatric Urology, Center for Kidney Transplantation, Advanced Robotics and Image-Guided Surgery Center and Center for Female Urology, among others.

ASCO: USC researchers elucidate factors affecting cancer survival

Continued from page 3

The data suggest that the estrogen pathway may play an important role in the progression of the disease. Further study is needed to explore the mechanisms of estrogen and pancreas progression.

In a study showing gender as an independent prognostic factor in patients with localized and metastatic esophageal cancer, researchers found

that women had a significantly better overall survival rate than males. A total of 21,584 patients were screened and divided into age at diagnosis, sex and ethnicity.

The findings suggest sex hormone pathways may have a potential impact on tumor progression. The data warrant further studies to explore the role of these pathways in the diagnosis and treatment of esophageal cancer, researchers said.

In case of an emergency...

Call the Emergency Information Phone: 213-740-9233 The emergency telephone system can handle 1,400 simultaneous calls. It also has a backup system on the East Coast.

Visit the USC Web: <http://emergency.usc.edu> This page will be activated in case of an emergency. Backup Web servers on the East Coast will function if the USC servers are incapacitated.

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